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BOOK REVIEWS

The Law of Conversion. By Renzo D. Bowers. Published by Little, Brown & Co., Boston. 1917. pp. lx, 583.

No book can please all men; it would seem praise enough to most to say that they do one thing well. Mr. Bowers has arranged his book more handily for reference than has any other legal author whose work we have seen—no slight advantage in a work intended primarily for the practitioner. His table of contents is remarkably clear and full; his digesting is reasonably accurate; he cites American decisions plentifully and, in the main, to the point. If in his treatment he does not give us the benefit of that study of legal history which proved to him that his subject was “of rather ancient origin,” it may be he makes up for that by industry in collecting the cases in this country.

The thought of a book on the law of conversion was a happy one. It is a vexed and troublesome field, both in its *what* and in its *why*. It is well worth careful treatment as a unit. And we agree with Mr. Bowers that the principles involved have become no less distinct and definite because modern procedure has merged trover with the simple civil action; our regret is rather that those principles have become no more distinct and definite by reason of his book. It is many years now since Bishop hazarded his view that one desirable feature of a text-book was to grapple with difficulties, “to overcome them if it can, and to state the result, either that the principle is so and so, or that the author cannot ascertain what it is.” Co-ordination, clean presentation of difficulties, reasoned solution of them, are strikingly rare in Mr. Bowers’ treatise. But when in the future the true work on the law of conversion appears, its author will have found much of the drudging material-collection done for him in advance; meanwhile the present volume will serve the practicing lawyer as a ready guide to the authorities.

KARL N. LLEWELLYN

A Treatise on the Law of Inheritance Taxation. By Lafayette B. Gleason and Alexander Otis. Published by Matthew Bender & Co., Albany. 1917. pp. lviii, 836.

Law-books do not as a rule present striking points of individuality. This treatise is, however, somewhat of an innovation in several ways. For one thing, the absence of footnotes gives the pages an appearance unfamiliar to one accustomed to the ordinary law-book. The absence of notes does not indicate an omission of the citation of authorities; these are simply inserted in the text at the places where the note-figures would normally appear. This innovation is clearly an improvement in the matter of eliminating the eye-strain involved in transferring the attention from the middle to the bottom of the page and back again; on the other hand, it tends to some extent to break the continuity of the text. It will be interesting to observe how this feature is received by the legal profession.

Another point of departure from the traditional form of a law-book appears in the table of cases. Instead of being arranged in a single alphabetical list, it is split up into thirty-seven different alphabets arranged by jurisdictions, beginning with New York and ending with the United States and England.